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September 29, 2021

The Honorable Stephanie Klick
Chair, House Committee on Public Health
EXT E2.608
P.O. Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768

[RE: Outline of invited testimony concerning issues involving access to health care along the Texas-Mexico border]

Dear Representative Klick,

The Texas Ambulance Association (the "TAA") appreciates this opportunity to provide invited testimony to the House Committee on Public Health concerning the matter referenced above. The following are highlights of the various issues impacting the access to and availability of ambulance services that will be presented during your committee hearing on Tuesday, October 5th at 10 AM.

Widespread staffing shortages of certified EMS personnel

- The effects of COVID-19 and subsequent variants on the employment of EMS personnel who are at high risk of occupational exposure, especially along the border.
- EMT and paramedic training programs are witnessing a sharp decline in new student enrollment due to occupational risk and COVID-related program requirements.
- Active recruitment and employment of certified EMS personnel by federal agencies, NGO's and government contractors to provide direct care and transportation for non-citizen immigrants at exorbitant rates of pay that are disconnected from traditional health care reimbursement methods.

The effects of increased demand on ambulance deployment and utilization

- Greater unanticipated volume, when combined with pronounced staffing shortages results in longer response and turnaround times. This is particularly true in view of necessary decontamination precautions.
- Successive waves of high-density non-citizen migrants crossing the border renders the staffing and deployment of ground ambulance resources unpredictable, if not impossible.

The TAA looks forward to testifying and answering your committee's questions regarding these and other related matters.

Respectfully,

Mack Gilbert
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